

WHERE IS THE GOD OF ELIJAH?

NO. 2596

A SERMON
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*"And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said,
 Where is the LORD God of Elijah?
 and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over."
 2 Kings 2:14*

THE great object for our souls to seek after is our God. We love His house, the place where prayer is wont to be made is very dear to us, but the courts of the Lord's house are dull and dreary if the Lord Himself be not there. Our question is not so much, "Where are His courts?" as, "Where is JEHOVAH Himself?"

Brethren, we love beyond expression the ministry of God's Word, it has been unspeakably precious to our spirits, by it we were called into spiritual life, and by it our life is fed and nourished, but still, if God Himself be not in the Word, and with the Word, what does it avail us? Our spirits must be sustained by the Holy Spirit, or else they faint and die.

In reading a gracious book, or in engaging in private devotion, or in coming into the great assemblies of God's house, our chief question is, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?"—for, if we do not find God in all these things, what have we found? Nothing, or we have mere husk, whereas the precious, priceless kernel is lost to us.

Oh, I wish that we always felt in prayer that we would never leave off praying till we found the God of prayer! I wish that, in our singing, we would always feel that we had not truly praised God at all unless our song had found Him, and every note in it had had some one of His attributes to sing. Oh, what an effort it is sometimes really to get at God! We are ready to cry with the poet—

*"I will approach Thee—I will force
 My way through obstacles to Thee."*

"I will break through gates of brass, I will leap over the loftiest wall, but I must get to my God, the living God. Oh, when shall I come and appear before God?" I wish that we were always in this state of mind, that our continual cry might be, "The LORD God of Elijah—we must have Him, we cannot live without Him, we cannot be strong without Him, we cannot rejoice without Him. We would not wish even to be in heaven without Him, it would be no heaven to us if the Lord were gone from it. 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.'"

Now, this great truth that our first and last objective should be to seek our God is peculiarly true when we are called upon to undertake some new office or work unknown to us. Elisha, for instance, has poured water upon the hands of Elijah, and been his personal attendant, but Elijah has been taken away by a whirlwind into heaven, and now Elisha has to be the prophet of Israel in Elijah's stead. A great weight of responsibility has fallen upon him. He has to do what scarcely any other man of woman born had ever done before, he has to follow one who seems well-nigh inimitable, he has to be successor of the prophet of fire—the man of God, Elijah.

"Well," you say, "he has Elijah's mantle." Yes, he has his mantle, and there is something in that. If ever I could feel any great reverence for relics, I should like to have Elijah's mantle. Elisha had it, but

what was the use of having the mantle of Elijah unless he could also have his God? Though he be called to take the mantle, and with it to strike the waters, yet he knows where his strength must lie, and his prayer, his cry, is, "Here is the prophet's mantle, but where is JEHOVAH, God of Elijah?" If he can get Elijah's God, then the mantle will mean something, but if not, it may even be like a garment of fire to him when he puts it on, and he will not be able to wear it becomingly. Men will see that he has Elijah's mantle, but they will ask, "Where is Elijah's power?"

Now, dear brother, you are about to succeed a man of God. You have his mantle, the people have chosen you, so you are entering in by the door, you have not intruded into the office uncalled. You are a fit man, no doubt, to be a successor of the one who has fallen asleep, but do not be satisfied with your succession to the office. Whatever it is that has been bequeathed to you by your predecessor, be not satisfied with that alone, above everything else, you want his God. If you have his God, you will do very well even if you do not have his mantle. If you should turn out to be a very different man from him who went before you—as different as Elisha was from Elijah—you will do very well if your confidence is where your holy predecessor placed his confidence.

And you, good sister, have undertaken the charge of a class, or some special work for Christ, and the dear sister who went before you was a woman of renown, her death has made a great gap in the church, and you do not feel fit to fill it. Well, never mind about that, if you can get her God, if you can rest in Him with a simple faith, you may go on without the slightest fear. If you have the same God as she had, and have the same faith in Him, even if you do not work exactly in the same way, yet you shall bring glory to God, and you shall be a blessing to those around about you.

I exhort all young people who are entering upon an untried path to say to themselves, "Where is my father's God? The dear old man has fallen asleep, and I am apt to cry, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof,' but I have now to follow him. Oh, that I may have the same Spirit resting upon me, the same God to come to my succor! Then I shall do well enough." You see, then, dear friends, this question of Elisha is an important one, but most of all when you are entering upon some untried work, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?"

This question also comes in most appropriately when some great difficulty lies in your way. Before Elisha, the Jordan is flowing, a deep and rapid stream, how is he to cross it? He takes the mantle which those waters knew before, when Elijah passed that way, and striking them with it, he cries, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" and the waters at once divide, and the prophet walks through. Have you come to a great difficulty, my dear friend? Cannot you get over it? Are you in trouble about it?

Now, if this is a difficulty that ought to be removed, the shortest way to have it removed is to go to God about it. If it be one that ought not to be removed, then also you have done rightly in going to God, for He who will not remove it will at least give you grace to glorify Him in some other way. The best thing we can do, in all times of trouble and trial, is to lay the matter before the Lord.

Here is a church in difficulty, it does not know what to do, or which way to look. This is the question for its members to ask, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" Here is a Christian man in great difficulties, he has not brought himself into them, but the pressure of the times has brought him into a very sad condition, what is he to do? Why, look to his God, and see what God will do, let him also cry, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?"

I do not think that we shall ever find that any man truly trusted in God, and yet was confounded. No difficulty which was ever propounded to the Most High, and left in His hands, ever remained a difficulty long. He has the solution of all our problems, the answer to all our riddles. He can work out to a blessed result all our difficulties. There is nothing which can possibly be beyond the power of Him whose name is JEHOVAH, the I AM, God all-sufficient.

So, then, we learn from Elisha's question that we must specially ask after God when we are beginning any new work, or when there is some great difficulty in our way.

Thus have I introduced the text, now there are two things I wish to speak upon. The first is, *this question turned into a prayer*, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" Though it reads like an inquiry, yet

there is no doubt that, properly construed, it is a prayer, an invocation, “Where is JEHOVAH, the God of Elijah?” Secondly, if we have time, we will have a few words together upon *this question answered*, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?”

I. First, then, let us think of THIS QUESTION TURNED INTO A PRAYER, and let us ourselves pray it as we meditate upon it, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?”

That means, first, *the Lord that kept Elijah faithful when all the rest of the nation turned aside*. Elijah could say, with some little exaggeration, “I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away.” Jezebel, that imperious Sidonian queen, held Ahab entirely under her power, and she had set up the worship of the goddess Ashtaroth, which had straightway become popular all over the land, though it was accompanied by foul and filthy rites, and side by side with that was the worship of Baal. The worship of the Most High God was carried on by the faithful few, but they generally consisted of the very poorest of the land, and they were molested, and persecuted, and hunted to the death, by the cruel and idolatrous zeal of Jezebel.

But there was one man at least whom Ahab and Jezebel could not touch—one man who was Ahab’s master, who spoke out for JEHOVAH even to the king’s face, and who stood alone, and cried, “The God that answereth by fire, let him be God.” When the fire-answer had come, he cried to the people, “Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape.” That man, when all the waters raged around him, stood like a rock, unmoved and unmovable, for the most part of his life he was steadfast and firm.

This is the kind of men that we want today. See how the whole world seems to be rocking and reeling, and men are continually asking for one novelty after another. This cry for something fresh has led to the casting off of the worship of God. “Nay,” say you. “Yea,” say I. They worship, today, gods many and lords many, gods newly come up, which our fathers knew not, but JEHOVAH, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, is scarcely known among us. Men, so far as they could, have dethroned Him, they have set up an effeminate being whom they call their god—a god without justice, a god whose name has no terror in it, as the name JEHOVAH has, as we read the story of it in the Old Testament.

We want, nowadays, to have men who will say, “We worship no new god. The God of the Old Testament, who is also the God of the New—this God is our God forever and ever, He shall be our Guide even unto death.” You know how they cry down JEHOVAH. They will not have Him, at least, they will not have Him on the throne. His sovereignty is a thing that is scoffed at and made a by-word almost everywhere. And yet, beloved, JEHOVAH reigns. He sits upon the floods. He rules as King forever and ever, and unto His blessed name we will give praise, whatever others may do.

In these days too, we want men who can stand steadfast for all kinds of truth—not only as doctrines, but in practice. We want you, young men, to be upright and honest in your trade, when so many tradesmen all around you do all sorts of evil things in order to get gain. We want you, young men, to confess Christ in the workshop, and to stand up for Him amidst the mass of your associates who keep not the Sabbath, neither regard the worship of God at all. Do you ask, “How can we be kept steadfast?” The answer is, “Where is JEHOVAH, the God of Elijah?”—for He that held him up can hold us up.

I would that we had ten thousand men like John Knox was in Scotland—men that could not be turned aside from the truth—men that knew the power of it in their hearts, and that know the practice of it by being sanctified of the Spirit of God, and who therefore are “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” We shall never have such men unless they find the LORD God of Elijah, so let us all seek for Him.

Next, this question, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” reminds me of *Elijah’s mighty power in prayer*. A man of like passions with ourselves was this Elias, yet God gave to him the key of prayer, and he locked up heaven with a turn of his hand, and when the time came, he went up to the top of Mount Carmel, and put his head between his knees, and there cried to the Lord until once again the heavens were covered with clouds, and down came a deluge of rain.

This was the man who, in his chamber, prayed back the spirit of a child. This was he who could have anything of God that he listed, like Luther of old. Do not some of you say, "Would God I had his power in prayer! How am I to get it?" Why, where he got it—of his God. The LORD God of Elijah can help you to pray prayers like his, and if He does, He will give you answers like his.

It may be that you will have nothing to do with bringing or withholding rain, but you may have something to do with things quite as important, that shall touch the inward lives of men, and shall bring them food from heaven, and the benediction and bedewing of the Holy Ghost. Get you to your God, lay hold upon Him by a brave and daring faith. Fall flat upon the promises, and then pray straight up to the God who gave them, and so shall you get the blessing that you desire.

You and I are going about after this and after that, till we compass sea and land, and miss the blessing. Straightforward makes the best running. Let us go straight to God in prayer, with simple confidence in Him, and we shall not have long to ask, "Where is JEHOVAH, the God of Elijah?" for we shall prove that He still answers prayer even as He did in the prophet's day.

The third rendering of the text is this, *As God provided for Elijah at the brook Cherith and at Zarephath, so can He provide for us.* I think I hear you say, "My store of meal is running very short, my flask of oil is almost empty. 'Where is the LORD God of Elijah?'" Why, He is with His Elias still, and He is with such widows as the widow of Zarephath still. Do you think that He is dead? Has it crossed your mind that Divine Providence is a failure, and that God will no more provide for His own?

Oh, think not so! If you do, your unbelief will prove a scourge to you, it will break that meal barrel, it will dash in pieces that oil flask. You will get nothing of the Lord if you waver, but if you keep strong in faith, you shall find that JEHOVAH Jireh is still His name—"The LORD will provide." "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." God can help us to put such confidence in Him that we shall find the LORD God of Elijah supplying our daily wants, and feeding us until we want no more.

Sing you this song, O you tried ones! Sing it at this moment—

*"The Lord my Shepherd is,
I shall be well supplied;
Since He is mine, and I am His,
What can I want beside?"*

I see also in this great text, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" that *the God that raised the dead by Elijah is the God I want.* Oh, I have had to try to raise the dead in this place many a time, and it has been done too! Man has spoken God's mandate, and as the command has been uttered, "Lazarus, come forth," full many a Lazarus has left his tomb, and you, my brothers and sisters, by your gentle, kindly teaching, have loosed them, and let them go about their daily occupation, or upon holy service, as those who have been raised from the dead.

But there are still some dead ones for whom I have prayed full often, and others too, who love them, have pleaded for them, we never cease to make them the subject of our earnest supplication, but they are still as dead as they were several years ago. Shall they remain so? Shall they lie there till, at last, they become utterly corrupt? Shall it ever be said of them, "Bury the dead out of my sight"? God will say that concerning all dead souls, for He will have no dead ones in heaven. They must be put out of sight, they must be driven from the presence of Christ, and from the glory of His power—far from His glorious abode of peace and love.

O brothers and sisters, pray mightily for these dead ones, for still the LORD God of Elijah can raise them! Never despair of anybody, and remember how, even when Lazarus had been so long dead that his body stank, he was nevertheless made to live, and if men go so far into evil that their sins turn to corruption, and their lives become foul and loathsome, yet even then the quickening Spirit can make them live.

Oh, let us be importunate for these dead souls! Let us still plead for them, let us urge our suit with earnestness and perseverance, and let us never cease crying unto God for them until the dead in sin become the living in Zion. Here is the great hope for them, and here alone, that the God who raises the dead is still in the midst of His church.

Further, we still want “the LORD God of Elijah” as “*the God that answereth by fire.*” Today, in this country, we are undergoing very much the same sort of ordeal as Elijah had to endure. The priests of the modern Baal and of the groves swarm on every side. The mass and all the other idols of Rome are set up again in this land, they may be seen as objects of adoration even in our parish churches. The candle that Latimer lit, which never can be quite put out, seems as if it burns but very dimly in this land, and the old and glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was preached by Luther and by Calvin, and by our Lord and His apostles, has come to be regarded as an old worn-out thing, to be thrown away and cast aside.

Oh, for the God of Elias once again to answer by fire! We want a baptism of the Holy Spirit for all such as are spiritually alive, and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon such as know not the Lord, and obey not His truth. Oh, that we could see the Lord making bare His arm again in the midst of the land! When I think of how God visited Pharaoh, and magnified His might by smiting that stout-hearted rebel by plague after plague, my soul cries, “O Lord, wilt Thou not rend the heavens, and come down, even if it is with a rod of iron, to dash in pieces, like a potter’s vessel, those who have so long resisted Thy grace? Thy longsuffering seems to have been displayed long enough, and men grow bolder and yet bolder in their iniquity.”

I can understand the spirit of Jonah—though I do not wish to fall into it—when he seemed to feel that Nineveh ought to be stricken for its enormous sin. At this day the world still lies in the wicked one, and Christ crucified is disowned and derided. Perhaps London is more heathenish than ever it was since first the foot of savage walked among its woods, the people grow worse and worse in many respects, and there is less and less of vital godliness and of seeking after the Most High. O Lord, how long? “Pluck Thy right hand out of Thy bosom,” and once again, as on Carmel the fire descended, so let the sacred flame fall upon Your true church, that we may no longer need to ask, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” We want *Him*, we want HIM beyond everything in these dead days.

Now look yet again at our text, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” I should like to meet Him, and to know Him as *the God who gave Elijah such wondrous food.* In the strength of that meat, he went for forty days, I should like to feed on that kind of fare! One grain of meal to a gallon of water is the sort of food served out by some preachers nowadays, there is nothing in it to satisfy or to sustain the soul.

But God gave Elijah forty days’ meat at one meal, do you, dear friends, ever get meals such as that? I do, when I read certain books, not modern thought books, give me no such meat as that, but let me have one of the good solid Puritan volumes that are so little prized nowadays, and my soul can feed upon that. You do the same, and see whether you do not find food that will last not merely for forty days, but that will make you strong to walk before the Lord even unto the Mount of God, there to bless and adore Him forever and ever.

But oh, the milk-and-water diet that is too often given in these times! Well may we cry, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” Oh, to be fed once more upon the doctrines of discriminating grace! Oh, to be told continually of the love without a beginning, love without a change, love without an end! Oh, to hear of an atonement that *is* an atonement, and that does indeed put away sin—not the kind of atonement of which many talk today, which is all mist and cloud, and which accomplishes something or nothing according as men are pleased to let it! We want again to have meat unto life eternal, to know the great truth of union to Christ, of being in Him, and so safe before the Lord, and made well-pleasing unto the Most High. God send us back this food!

Brothers and sisters, do not be satisfied until you get it. Turn from all other tables and say, ““Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” Where is that flesh that is meat indeed, and that blood which is drink indeed?” Be content with none but Christ, have no Gospel but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. May God so satisfy the souls of His saints that they shall be able either to serve well or to suffer well! We are only

strong either in patience or in zeal as the LORD God of Elijah feeds us with the Bread which came down from heaven, the Bread of life, Christ Jesus Himself. "Lord, evermore give us this Bread!"

Once more, we want *the God who took Elijah away in a chariot of fire*. I shall close with that. I daresay many of you do not expect to go to heaven in that way, if I had my choice between that form of translation and death, I think I would prefer to die. I never could sympathize with the great delight which some brethren have in expecting that they shall never die. Why not? You will be a loser even throughout eternity if you do not, for you will not have fellowship with Christ in His death so fully as those who fall asleep, and so have fellowship with Him in the grave. It will be a great joy to meet with Christ whatever we may miss in any other way. To behold Him, and to be with Him, is the utmost hope of our spirits, but still, I would not wish to miss fellowship with Him in death.

What is there to be afraid of in death? "The pain," says one. What pain? "The pain in dying." There is no pain in dying, there can be none, the only pain is in living. Death is the great *quietus*. There shall be no sorrow or sighing when death has passed upon the believer. What, then, are you afraid of? Of death? But has not Christ told you that you shall never die? You shall depart out of this world unto the Father, and very likely you will not know when you are going.

I have personally known several friends who were always afraid of dying, but I am morally certain that they never knew anything about death, for they went to bed, one night, apparently in good health, and when they were called in the morning, it was discovered that the Lord had called them before, and they had gone up to be "for ever with the Lord." The placid countenance showed that there had not been any struggle, probably not even a sigh or a gasp. They shut their eyes, and dreamed of heaven, and when they woke, they found that they were there. They had passed through no iron gates, nor struggled through any chill stream, but they were in heaven.

"Oh!" says someone, "but still I am afraid to die." Let me tell you of one who said the same. Some years ago, I was away in the South of France, I had been very ill there, and was sitting in my room alone, for my friends had all gone down to the midday meal. All at once it struck me that I had something to do out of doors, I did not know what it was, but I walked out, and sat down on a seat.

There came and sat on the seat next to me a poor, pale, emaciated woman in the last stage of consumption, and looking at me, she said, "O Mr. Spurgeon, I have read your sermons for years, and I have learned to trust the Savior! I know I cannot live long, but I am very sad as I think of it, for I am so afraid to die."

Then I knew why I had gone out there, and I began to try to cheer her. I found that it was very hard work. After a little conversation, I said to her, "Then you would like to go to heaven, but not to die?" "Yes, just so," she answered. "Well, how do you wish to go there? Would you like to ascend in a chariot of fire?" That method had not occurred to her, but she answered, "Yes, oh, yes!" "Well," I said, "suppose there should be, just round this corner, horses all on fire, and a blazing chariot waiting there to take you up to heaven, do you feel ready to step into such a chariot?" She looked at me, and she said, "No, I should be afraid to do that." "Ah!" I said "and so should I, I should tremble a great deal more at getting into a chariot of fire than I should at dying. I am not fond of being behind fiery horses, I would rather be excused from taking such a ride as that."

Then I said to her, "Let me tell you what will probably happen to you, you will most likely go to bed some night, and you will wake up in heaven." That is just what did happen to her not long after, her husband wrote to tell me that, after our conversation, she had never had any more trouble about dying, she felt that it was the easiest way into heaven, after all, and far better than going there in a whirlwind with horses of fire and chariots of fire, and she gave herself up for her Heavenly Father to take her home in His own way, and so she passed away, as I expected, in her sleep.

Now I want you, dear friends, to feel that your great need in dying is to have "the LORD God of Elijah" with you. If you have Him, then you may cry, "Come, horses of fire, and chariots of fire, we are not afraid to ride behind these fiery steeds if 'the LORD God of Elijah' is with us." Oh, no! Or it may be, "Come, silent chamber; come, bed made hard with weary weeks of pain; come, at last, the message

that the wheel is broken at the cistern, and that we must depart; come death, and some celestial band, to bear my soul away."

Thus you will have such a sweet realization of the presence of "the LORD God of Elijah" with you that you will not be at all afraid. You timid ones are sure to "play the man" when you come to die. Often, the most trembling saints are the boldest at the last. I have known some who dared hardly call their souls their own, they were so full of doubts and fears, but when they have come to the river, they have been the bravest of the brave.

You remember how Mr. Bunyan says of poor Miss Much-afraid, Mr. Despondency's daughter, that she went through the river singing! Some of God's Great-hearts, when they have died, have found the water up to their chin, and it is a glorious thing for them to be able to stand there, to feel the bottom beneath their feet, and to know that it is good, to let death do his worst, and all the while to be shouting, "Victory, victory, victory, I am more than conqueror through Him that loved me!"

But if you are weak, and feeble, and timid, you will very likely die in a different way, you will probably have a sweet, calm, happy, blessed passage. "The LORD God of Elijah" will be with you, and you shall triumph at the last, even as He did.

You see, dear friends, that the time has gone, though I have only been able to speak upon the first part of my subject, so you must come another time for the second part, if the Lord will.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 KINGS 17

Verse 1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.*

How abruptly this man breaks in upon the scene! He leaps like a lion from the thicket. There is no previous announcement of his coming, but here he stands, God's own man ordained to bear witness in evil times—to stand like a brazen pillar when everything around him seems to be moving from its place. Ahab had not been accustomed to be spoken to in this fashion. Mark how personal is Elijah's message, he does not begin even by saying, as the prophets usually did, "Thus says the Lord." There is something that at first seems almost audacious about his expression, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

A man may sometimes seem self-assertive when, really, he has so completely lost himself in God that he does not care what people think about him, whether they regard him as an egotist or not. Some men appear to be modest because they are proud, while others seem to be proud because they have sunk themselves, and only speak so boldly because they have their Master's authority at the back of their words. Bravely did Elijah say, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

2-3. *And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.*

Of course, the prophet would have had to share in the general want unless God had provided for him, and therefore the Lord took care that His servant should be hidden away where a brooklet would continue to run after the moisture had departed from other places.

4. *And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.*

Perhaps someone says, "Ravens were more likely to *rob* the prophet than to *feed* him," and so they were. Some have objected that these ravens were unclean, what if they were? Things are not made unclean because they are carried by unclean creatures. Did not Abigail bring to David food upon asses which were unclean? There is no sense in that objection. "Oh, but!" somebody else asks, "how should ravens bring food?" How should they not, if God commanded them? All creatures are under His control.

Granted a God, and a miracle is simple enough. If God does not feed His people by any other means, He will command ravenous beasts and unclean birds to feed them.

5. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan.

It is the glory of Elijah that he does whatever God bids him, asking no questions. He simply, like a child, goes to the brook just as, like a hero, he had previously stood before the king.

6-7. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

Brooks will dry up, even if godly men are being sustained by them. Is there anyone here whose brook is drying up? Has it quite dried up? Still trust you in God, for, if the ravens are put out of commission, God will employ some other agency.

8-9. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you.

It was a time of famine, yet God sent him to a widow woman! She is sure to need sustaining herself, yes, and she shall get it too, through sustaining the prophet. He that could command the ravens to feed His servant could command a widow woman to do the same thing, and He did so. This woman does not appear to have been originally a worshipper of JEHOVAH. She lived in a heathen country, and probably was herself a heathen, but she reverenced the servant of JEHOVAH, and she did his bidding, and doubtless became a true follower of the living God.

10. So he arose and went to Zarephath.

There is the same unreasoning faith, "So he arose," just as, in the fifth verse, it is written, "So he went," that is, with all alacrity, as a matter of course, he did his Lord's bidding without any question.

10. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there—

There she was, the woman who was to sustain him. She had come, no doubt, with a carriage and pair, to take him home, to her mansion. Oh, no! "The widow woman was there"—

10. Gathering of sticks:

She was a poor woman to sustain him, but there she was, "gathering of sticks."

10. And he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

Water was scarce then, every drop was very precious, it was therefore a large request that Elijah made to her.

11. And as she was going to fetch it,—

For she saw, by his garment, and by his majestic bearing, that he was a messenger of God, "As she was going to fetch it,"—

11-12. He called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

It was such a little quantity, that two sticks would be quite enough, yet this is the woman who is to sustain Elijah! Poor creature, she needs someone to sustain her and her son! How often does God use very strange means for the accomplishment of His blessed purposes!

13. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

What a trial for her faith! This stranger must have the first portion of her last meal, yet she had faith enough to obey his word.

14-15. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah:

Faith is blessedly contagious, God, by His Spirit, can make the faith of one to beget faith in others. This woman learns, from the very boldness of Elijah, from the very strength of his aspect, to believe in God, and she does as he tells her.

15-18. *And she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.*

And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

Poor creature, having lost her husband, her heart was wrapped up in her son! Under this sharp trial, she condemned herself, but she also began to have hard thoughts of the man of God. We none of us know what we may say when we are overwhelmed with a great trouble. It is easy to find fault with the utterance of a poor distracted spirit, and to say, "That is improper language."

Have you never spoken so in the hour of your grief? Blessed is that man from whose lips there has never escaped a wrong word in the time of his anguish. This widow woman was a mother with a dead child in the house, do not find fault with her, but tenderly pity her, and all who are in a like case.

19-20. *And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, have thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?*

The words of the woman had touched his heart, and perhaps he also spoke unadvisedly, but who are we that we should judge? He seemed to feel that, wherever he went, he was bringing trouble upon people. All Israel was afflicted with drought because of his prophecy, and now this poor woman had lost her darling child. Yet even in this desperate case he did not give up hope, and prayer, and effort.

21. *And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.*

This was splendid faith on the part of the prophet. Nobody had ever prayed before for the restoration of one that was dead, no one had ever attempted to work such a miracle as this, but Elijah's faith was strung up to a wonderful pitch. Here was faith ready to receive the blessing, so the blessing would surely come. Here was the faith that could move mountains, and stir the very gates of death. Elijah treads an unaccustomed road, and asks for what had never been given before.

22-23. *And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.*

Elijah was never a man of many words, he was a prophet mighty in deeds, he said little, but what he did spoke loudly.

24. *And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.*

Did she not know this before? Yes, or else she would not have given him the first portion of her meal. She must have known it, for she had been living for a long time upon the meal and the oil which he had multiplied. But now she said that she knew it, as if she had never known it before. God has a way of bringing truth home to the heart with such vividness that, though we have been perfectly acquainted with it for years, yet we are compelled to cry, "Now I know it, now I have it as I never had it before, now I grasp it and embrace it with my very soul!" May we all know the truth of God in this grand fashion! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.